

**Fran VanTreese
17 Moody Field Road
Amherst, MA 01002
413 549-3578
FranVant@aol.com**

December 10, 2010

Peter Jessop, Chair
Community Preservation Act Committee
4 Boltwood Ave.
Amherst, MA 01002

Dear Mr. Jessop:

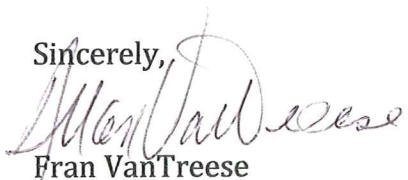
On behalf of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, I am pleased to submit a proposal for a feasibility study for an off-road, multi-use path that would connect the University of Massachusetts to the densely settled North Amherst center.

This project provides an opportunity to collaborate with the University to create an outdoor recreational facility in a wildlife rich habitat that few currently know about or have access to. In addition, this multi-use path will provide yet another link in the regional network of paths and greenways.

At a time when over half the adults in this country are overweight or obese and stress is a major cause of health problems, providing safe, convenient, low- or no-cost outdoor recreation opportunities is critical to our collective well-being. Multi-use paths that are close to where people live and work enable people to incorporate regular exercise into their daily lives. We believe there is a tremendous need for this project and that CPA funds are uniquely qualified to make it happen.

Please feel free to contact me or Karen Kowles, the Chair of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, if you have any questions about this proposal.

Sincerely,



Fran VanTreese
Vice Chair, Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee

**Community Preservation Act Proposal
For a
Feasibility Study for a Multi-Use Path
Connecting the
University of Massachusetts with North Amherst Center**

Project Description:

This project consists of a feasibility study for an off-road, multi-use path connecting the University of Massachusetts to North Amherst Center.

Background:

The Town of Amherst and the University of Massachusetts together have a uniquely valuable opportunity to build an off-road, multi-use path connecting the University of Massachusetts to North Amherst Center. By building on and extending from an existing cinder road that runs north from Governors Drive, the path could be built relatively inexpensively and with relatively few easements and permits. The cinder road runs through a wooded area bordered by wetlands, ponds and the Mill River and is home to a large number of birds and other wildlife.

The path would provide tremendous recreation opportunities for the town of Amherst. It would be a safe recreation space located in an environmentally rich area that would be immediately accessible for both UMass students and the nearly 3,000 residents of North Village, Pufton Village, Brandywine and Townhouse apartment complexes. It would provide easy access to and from the North Amherst Village Center, which is an area in transition and the focus of current community planning efforts. This path would complement those efforts and would provide North Amherst residents with safe and motor vehicle-free access to an ecologically rich and varied wildlife habitat. See attached map.

The path would also provide a missing connection toward completing a regional network of paths and greenways. Much as the Swift Connector along University Drive connects the UMass Campus to the Norwottuck Rail Trail, this proposed path would connect the campus to North Amherst Center and to the Franklin County Bikeway.

This project is of top priority to the Amherst Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee. For over ten years planners at UMass, Amherst and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission have been enthusiastic about the project, and preliminary work has been done. The next step is a detailed feasibility study. The Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee believes that CPA funds will not only leverage UMass funding for the feasibility study, but will also push this project to the forefront and make it become a reality. Without the stimulus of CPA funds for the Town portion of the project area, this project is likely to languish on the drawing board at the University.

Proposal - Summary:

We propose to use Community Preservation Act Funds to look at the feasibility of the project on land located in the Town of Amherst. The University of Massachusetts will match these funds for feasibility work on the UMass owned portion of the project.

The tasks of the feasibility study would include:

- Identify potential route alignments from the UMass path to the North Amherst area.
- Evaluate the potential routes and rank them from best to worst for the path north of the existing cinder road
- Determine rights of way and easement issues
- Identify needed street and sidewalk realignments
- Identify potential conflicts with vehicles and evaluate mitigating measures
- Conduct interviews, surveys and/or focus groups with potential users
- Identify wetlands issues, including possible environmental impact, need for permits, and crossings
- Identify other permitting issues
- Develop preliminary project budget

Scope of work: detail and rationale for the tasks of the feasibility study

- Identify potential route alignments from the UMass path to the North Amherst area.

As currently envisioned, the proposed path would be constructed beginning at a parking lot on the north edge of the UMass Campus on Governors Drive and would be constructed on the existing cinder road on the UMass campus that runs to the rear of North Village Apartments. The path would then run either behind the westerly edges North Village, Pufton Village, Brandywine and Townhouse apartment complexes to Meadow Street or through those apartment complexes via parking lots or sidewalks. (See Map) The feasibility study would evaluate which route option would be preferable.

- Evaluate the potential routes and rank them from the best to least favorable route for the path north of the existing cinder road

Using the additional information collected from the tasks below, the study would rate the proposed route alignments as the best option to the least acceptable option. During the ranking keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to provide the best usable path from the UMass cinder path to the North Amherst area.

- Determine rights of way and easement issues

Easements and rights of way agreements would need to be obtained from the owners of Presidential, North Village, Pufton Village, Brandywine and Townhouse apartments. An easement or right of way might also be needed from WMECO. The study would identify the appropriate legal mechanisms and would assess the likelihood of success and probable cost of obtaining these agreements.

- Identify needed street and sidewalk realignments

One option is for a portion of the path to travel over private roads and sidewalks. In addition some portion of the path would travel along Meadow Street to reach North Amherst Center. The study should look at what changes would be needed to both private and public ways.

- Identify potential conflicts with vehicles and evaluate mitigating measures

Based on acceptable engineering practice for the design of multi-use and bike facilities, the study would identify the potential conflicts between path users and motorist and conflicts between area residents and path users. Once the conflicts are identified for the route the feasibility study would develop a list of strategies to mitigate or remove the conflict.

- Assist the Town in conducting interviews, surveys and/or focus groups with potential users

The feasibility study would ascertain the potential use and interest in the path among residents of the adjacent apartment complexes, North Amherst residents, residents of nearby UMass dorms, and users of the Franklin County Bikeway and other connecting paths.

- Identify wetlands issues

The project area contains ponds and wetlands and falls within the flood plain of the Mill River. Some of the UMass land is located in the Town of Hadley. The remainder of the project is in Amherst. Thus, the project falls within the jurisdiction of two municipalities. The study would identify wetland concerns and permitting issues and identify the level of review that would be required by the project alternatives.

It is possible that one or more historic “pony truss” bridges donated by Professor Alan Lutenecker of the UMass Civil and Environmental Engineering department could provide wetlands crossings. The consultant would consider this option in evaluating permitting issues.

- Identify other permitting issues

Once the preferred route(s) is selected the consultant would review the plans to identify any other permitting issues that may arise. These might include MEPA permits, storm water 401 permits, local conservation permits etc.

Given the richness and complexity of the environment through which this facility is proposed, the study would also need to consider other possible issues like Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species, NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife, NHESP BioMap Core Habitat and other environmental and conservation issues.

- Develop preliminary project budget

The consultant will take the preferred route and develop a preliminary project cost based on Mass DOT weighted prices and construction items.

Project Budget:

Sources of Funds:

Town of Amherst Community Preservation Act Program:	\$50,000
University of Massachusetts	<u>\$50,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$100,000

The University of Massachusetts will make its contribution as “in-kind” donation of staff time and professional services. UMass has expanded its scope of services under a contract with VHB for a “Study and Recommendations for Mobility Improvements for Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Vehicles”. This project will be part of that already committed work.

Timeline

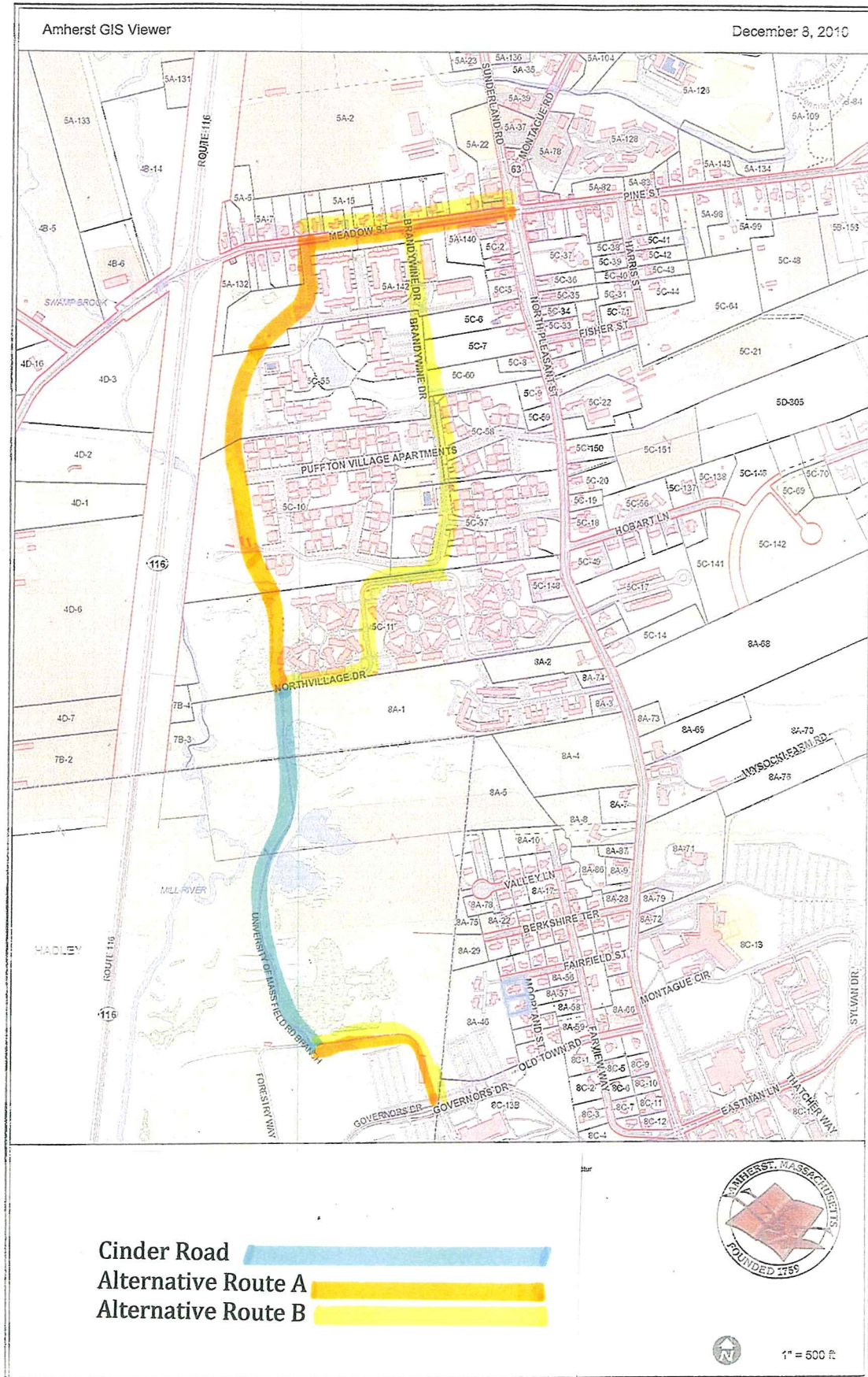
The feasibility study could be begun almost immediately upon funding award, as procurement regulations do not require competitive bidding for projects of this type. The feasibility study would be completed within 18 months of funding award.

Assuming the project is determined to be feasible, there is a great likelihood of funding for the construction of the project from both UMass resources and other funding sources because of the merits of the project within national priorities.

See attached:

Map of Project Area
Photos of Project Area
Support Letters

Project Area Map



Gateway to North Village



Wet Area Near the Cinder Road



Historic Bridge



The Cinder Road at UMass





UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST

Physical Plant Building
360 Campus Center Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9248

Campus Planning

voice: 413.545.1383
fax: 413.545.3684
<http://www.umass.edu/cp>

December 8, 2010

Mr. Peter Jessop, Chair
Community Preservation Act Committee
Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002

**RE: Support for Multi-Use Path Connection of the University of
Massachusetts to the North Amherst Village Center**

Dear Mr. Jessop,

I am pleased to provide this support letter for the proposal by the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee to seek CPAC funding for a feasibility study for a multi-use path that would connect the campus with the North Amherst village center. A large part of our campus community lives along the proposed route. They would benefit greatly from having direct access to such a recreational and transportation facility.

The University of Massachusetts has already committed a substantial amount of funding and staff resources to include work on the part of this project that is on University land as part of its campus master planning process. We are also in the process of procuring services from a transportation consultant to help incorporate transportation and recreational facilities into the master plan for our campus land. Our contribution to the Multi-Use Path Connection Study both in funding and content has been included in this scope of the campus planning effort.

I hope that you will support this cooperative planning effort between the University and the Town. We have all benefitted from the previous cooperative effort required to create the Arthur Swift Way Norwotuck Rail Trail Connector. I look forward to collaborating with the Town in another successful venture to improve the quality of life of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis J. Swinford".

Dennis J. Swinford, ASLA, AICP
Director

December 9, 2010

Peter Jessop
Community Preservation Act Committee
Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Ave.
Amherst, MA 01002

RE: Support for the Amherst Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee's proposal for CPA funds for a feasibility study of a multi-use path from the UMass campus to North Amherst.

Dear Mr. Jessop,

Please accept this letter of support for the Amherst Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee's application for CPA funds to complete a feasibility study for extending a shared use trail from the UMass campus into North Amherst. The corridor to be included in this feasibility study has been identified in the Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as a corridor with great potential for connections to other regional trails including the Swift Bikeway Connector, Norwottuck Rail Trail, Manhan Rail Trail, Five College Bikeway, and Northampton Bikeway.

The collective experience of communities here in Pioneer Valley is that shared use paths provide a lasting and profound impact on the quality of life for a large cross section of the population. Recent surveys of the Norwottuck Rail Trail have recorded counts as high as 1200 people on a single day. By fostering active lifestyles trails strengthen the community's commitment to public health, address issues of overweight and obesity and reduce the risk of chronic disease. By supporting the use of CSA funds for this project Amherst is choosing to create a healthier place for people to live and be active.

If selected for funding PVPC is available to assist and support this joint venture in every capacity necessary through the Local Technical Assistance Program. Thank you for considering this important project.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey G. McCollough
Senior Transportation Planner

The PVPC Norwottuck Rail Trail User Survey can be viewed via this link:

http://www.pvpc.org/web-content/docs/transp/norwtrail_surv.pdf

cc: T. Brennan, PVPC
F. VanTreese, Amherst Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee



Winter 2003

Departments

[Exchange](#)[Around the Pond](#)[Extended Family](#)[Great Sport](#)[North 40](#)[Arts](#)[Books](#)[Freeze-frame](#)

Features

[All my best friends are
here](#)[One giant molecule](#)[I learnt to dream of Sicily](#)[The Landscape Beautiful](#)

bridges of umass

ANYTIME I'M DRIVING and see a 'Bridge Closed' sign, I get out and look. Is this one we want?" asks Professor Alan Lutenegeger, head of the civil and environmental engineering department. Lutenegeger is collecting turn-of-the-century bridges to restore and use for pedestrians on the UMass Amherst campus.

The bridges he wants are mostly of iron and steel "pony truss" construction, meaning they have no top members connecting the sides. They're small bridges, less than 80 feet long.

"We're in the throes of repairing the first bridge," he says, which he hopes will be ready to use by spring or early summer of 2003. Lutenegeger got it from the Vermont Department of Transportation after he'd asked engineering alum David Scott '89, "You don't happen to have a bridge, do you?"

The great thing, says Lutenegeger, is that they're rescuing historic artifacts, and that they're not using any state money. "It's all been donations from alums – money, services, materials." And students provide volunteer labor as they learn how the old bridges were constructed.

Over the next five years Lutenegeger hopes to install some of the reconstructed beauties in different places around the campus. "We're working now with the grounds and space-planning people, historical commissions, waiting for approval." Possible spots include a site near the Campus Pond, a low spot near Sylvan dorm and a location near the College of Engineering, between Marston and Knowles. Some of the bridges will be purely ornamental, some functional, but none will connect buildings or go over highways.



CONNECTING: Mike Robertson '04, foreground, and David Camacho '03 work on bridging the campus. (photo by Ben Barnhart)

Around the Pond

[A truly defining moment](#)[...and a remarkable, joyful noise](#)[INAUGURATION:
More photos](#)[The Academic Imperative](#)[Inside & Out at SOM](#)[SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT:
More photos](#)[The bright idea:
UMass Amherst and Baystate Medical Center](#)[AMHERST & BAYSTATE: More photos](#)[Arts & Science & a major grant](#)[bridges of umass](#)[BRIDGES: Larger image](#)[Kudos](#)[Daring adventure, or nothing at all](#)[Daring Adventure: Larger image](#)[A delicate balance](#)[When the world is mud-luscious](#)

Eventually Lutenegeger hopes to create a walking tour so that visitors to campus can learn about historic bridges and “we can introduce engineering to kids.”

[\[top of page\]](#)

[Mud-luscious:](#)

[Larger image](#)

[Oh, my aging muscles](#)

[keeping count](#)

[Remembering Sarah Hamilton](#)

[The truest friend](#)



This Web site is an [Official Publication](#) of the [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#).
It is maintained by [Gravity Switch](#).

Let us know what you think - feedback@umassmag.com